

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

Year One Report



U.S. Department of Education
Washington, DC 20202

May 4, 2012

U.S. Department of Education

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May 2012

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This publication is available on the Department's website at <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/performance.html>.

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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The Race to the Top Assessment program was authorized as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). In September 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) awarded competitive, four-year grants to two consortia of states, the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced).¹

The two consortia are developing comprehensive assessment systems tied to common academic content standards that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement against standards, including those that are typically hard to measure, designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. The assessment systems must include one or more summative assessment components in mathematics and in English language arts that are administered at least once during the academic year in grades 3 through 8 and at least once in high school; both consortia are also creating a series of diagnostic, formative, or interim tests that will be available for their member states to provide on-going feedback during the school year to inform teaching and learning. The assessments must include all students, including English learners and students with disabilities. PARCC and Smarter Balanced will each develop a common measure for use by their member states whether individual students are college- and career-ready or on track to being college- and career-ready. The assessment systems will provide an accurate measure of student achievement, particularly for very high- and low-achieving students, and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course.

These assessment systems, which will be operational in the 2014-2015 school year, are intended to play a critical support role in educational systems; provide administrators, educators, parents, and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning; and help meet the President's goal of restoring, by 2020, the nation's position as the world leader in college graduates.

RACE TO THE TOP ASSESSMENT PROGRAM REVIEW

As part of the Department's commitment to supporting states as they implement ambitious reform, the Department established the Implementation and Support Unit (ISU) in the Office of the Deputy Secretary to administer, among others, the Race to the Top Assessment program. The goal of the ISU is to provide collaborative support to grantees as they implement unprecedented and comprehensive reforms to improve student outcomes. By building true partnerships with grantees, the ISU moves beyond a compliance-based monitoring structure while maintaining high expectations for results.

Consistent with this goal, the Department has developed a Race to the Top Assessment program review process that not only addresses the Department's responsibilities for fiscal and programmatic oversight, but is designed to identify areas in which the consortia need assistance and support to meet their goals. The ISU works with the Race to the Top Assessment consortia to identify and provide support based on their specific plans and needs. ISU staff encourages collaboration and partnership across the consortia and with outside experts to achieve and sustain educational reforms that improve student outcomes.

¹ More information about the Race to the Top Assessment program is available at www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment.

The consortia are accountable for implementing their approved Race to the Top Assessment plans. The program review is a continuous improvement process.² Regular updates and data from the consortium inform the Department's support for the consortia. In the event that adjustments are required to an approved plan, the consortium must submit a formal amendment request to the Department for consideration. The consortia may submit for Department approval amendment requests to a plan and budget provided that such changes do not significantly affect the scope or objectives of the approved plans. The consortia's approved plans, including any approved amendments, can be found at: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/awards.html.

If the Department determines that the consortium is not meeting its goals, activities, timelines, budget, or annual targets or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the Department will take appropriate enforcement action(s), consistent with 34 CFR § 80.43 in the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR).

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Department used the information gathered during the program review process (e.g., through monthly calls, an on-site visit conducted in October 2011, and the consortium's annual performance report (APR) which was submitted in August 2011) to draft this report on the consortium's year one implementation of the Race to the Top Assessment program. This report serves as an assessment of the consortium's overall implementation of its approved plan, highlighting successes and accomplishments, identifying challenges, and noting important lessons learned during the first year and key upcoming activities. The report is focused on the four primary components of the consortium's activities: governance; assessment design and development; professional capacity, outreach, and communications; and technology.

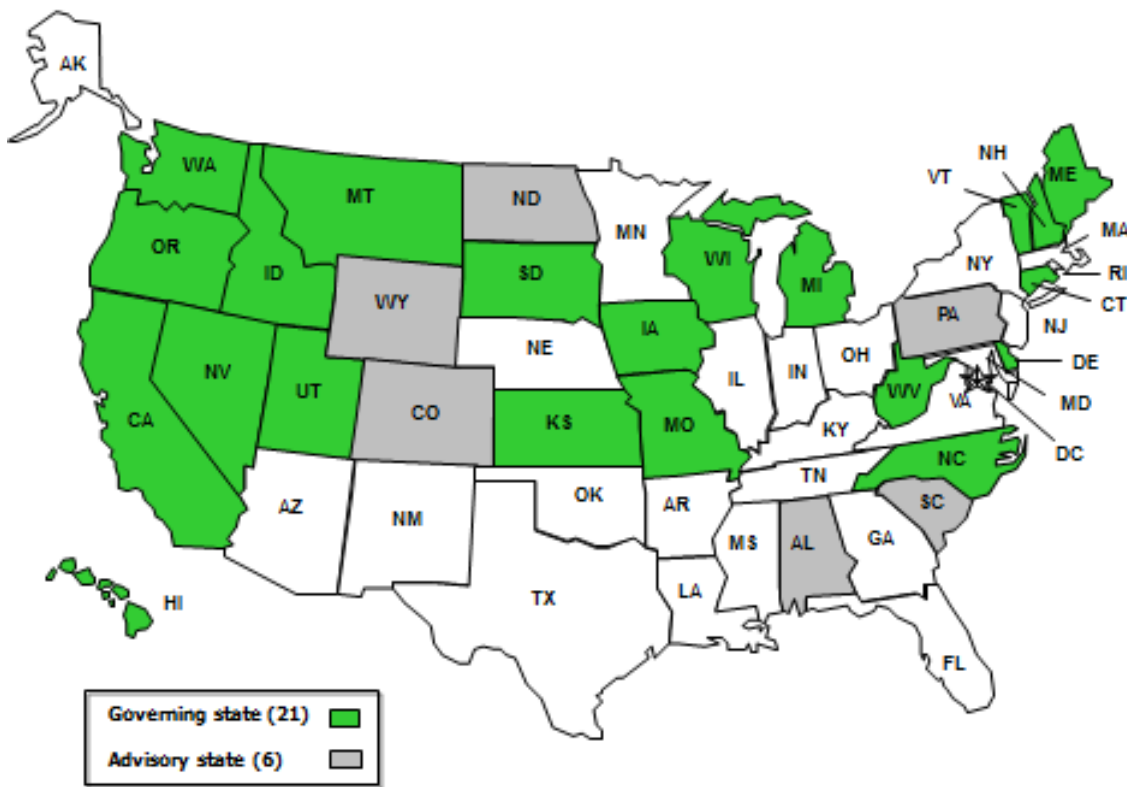
The report covers the period from awarding the grants in September 2010 through the end of January 2012, except in a few instances where more recent information is explicitly noted.

² More information about the ISU's Race to the Top Assessment program review process can be found at: www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/review-guide.pdf.

About the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced) consists of 27 states (see figure 1). Twenty-one are governing states, meaning they are involved in policy decision-making for the consortium and are committed to using the Smarter Balanced assessment system when it is operational. Six others are advisory states, meaning they may be involved in the work of both Smarter Balanced and the other consortium, PARCC, but have not committed to using either assessment system. Awarded a grant in the amount of \$175,649,539 by the Department in September 2010, Smarter Balanced selected Washington to serve as its fiscal agent. The consortium has contracted with WestEd as its project management partner.

Figure 1. State membership in Smarter Balanced as of March 31, 2012



THEORY OF ACTION

The Smarter Balanced application included a theory of action based on several principles of assessment systems in high-achieving nations and states (p. 32-33 of the consortium's application, available at www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-assessment/rtta2010smarterbalanced.pdf):

1. Assessments are grounded in a thoughtful, standards-based curriculum and are managed as part of an integrated system of standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction, and teacher development. Curriculum and assessments are organized around a well-defined set of learning progressions along multiple dimensions within subject areas. Formative and interim/benchmark assessments and instructional supports are conceptualized in tandem with summative assessments—all of them linked to the standards and supported by a unified technology platform.
2. Assessments produce evidence of student performance on challenging tasks that evaluate the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Instruction and assessments seek to teach and evaluate

knowledge and skills that generalize and can transfer to higher education and multiple work domains. They emphasize deep knowledge of core concepts and ideas within and across the disciplines—along with analysis, synthesis, problem solving, communication, and critical thinking—thereby requiring a focus on complex performances as well as on specific concepts, facts, and skills.

3. Teachers are integrally involved in the development and scoring of assessments. While many assessment components are efficiently scored with computer assistance, teachers must also be involved in the formative and summative assessment systems so that they deeply understand and can teach in a manner that is consistent with the full intent of the standards, while becoming more skilled in their own assessment practices.
4. The development and implementation of the assessment system is a state-led effort with a transparent and inclusive governance structure. Starting in December 2009, prior to being awarded an RTTA grant, Smarter Balanced has hosted weekly conference calls and several face-to-face meetings open to all states interested in establishing a consortium of states for the development of assessments aligned to the CCSS. Those activities have resulted in a governance structure that has established a consensus decision-making model and clear leadership roles. Each state's commitment to the collaborative process and products will facilitate the development of a complex system and signal ongoing support for its implementation.
5. Assessments are structured to continuously improve teaching and learning. Assessment as, of, and for learning is designed to develop understanding of what learning standards are, what high-quality work looks like, what growth is occurring, and what is needed for student learning.
6. Assessment, reporting, and accountability systems provide useful information on multiple measures that is educative for all stakeholders. Reporting of assessment results is timely and meaningful—offering specific information about areas of performance so that teachers can follow up with targeted instruction, students can better target their own efforts, and administrators and policymakers can more fully understand what students know and can do, in order to guide curriculum and professional development decisions.
7. Design and implementation strategies adhere to established professional standards. The development of an integrated, balanced assessment system is an enormous undertaking, requiring commitment to established quality standards in order for the system to be credible, fair, and technically sound.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM DESIGN

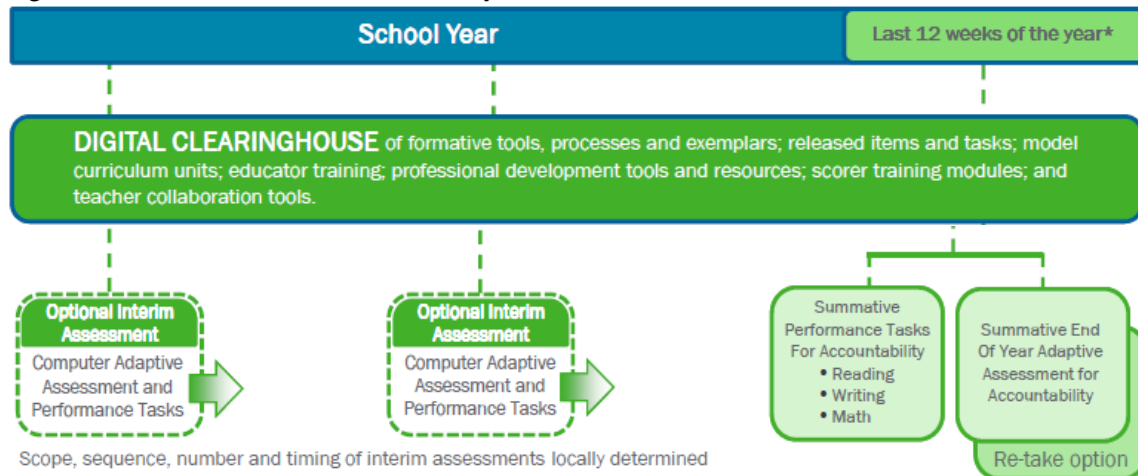
As Smarter Balanced described in its application, it will develop an assessment system that “promotes research-supported instructional practice and incorporates a balanced set of technology-supported tools, innovative assessments, and state-of-the-art classroom support mechanisms that work coherently to support teaching and learning” (p. 6 of the application). The assessment system will be comprised of formative, interim, and summative components.

Figure 2 details the primary components of the assessment system. Specifically, as noted in the application, Smarter Balanced proposes to implement a system that features the following (p. 5-6):

- CCSS-based computer-adaptive summative assessments that make use of technology-enhanced item types and teacher-developed and scored performance events;
- Computer-adaptive interim/benchmark assessments – reflecting learning progressions or content clusters – that provide more in-depth and/or mid-course information about what students know and can do in relation to the CCSS;
- Research-supported instructionally sensitive tools, processes, and practices developed by state educators that can be used formatively at the classroom level to improve teaching and learning;
- Focused on-going support to teachers through professional development opportunities and exemplary instructional materials linked to the CCSS;

- Online reporting and tracking system that enables access to key types of information about student progress toward college- and career-readiness and about specific strengths and limitations in what students know and are able to do at each grade level; and
- Cross-state communications network to inform stakeholders about Smarter Balanced activities and ensure a common focus on the goal of college- and career-readiness for all students.

Figure 2. Smarter Balanced assessment system



* Time windows may be adjusted based on results from the research agenda and final implementation decisions.

NOTE: From the Smarter Balanced web site (www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SMARTERBalanced_WebPresentation.pdf).

Smarter Balanced will develop summative assessments for each of grades 3 through 11. Assessments in grades 9 and 10 will be optional for states. The Smarter Balanced summative assessments will consist of:

- Performance tasks that require student-initiated planning, management of information and ideas, interaction with other materials or people, and production of more extended responses (p. 53 of the application).
- Computer-adaptive assessment that selects items for a student based on the student's responses to previous questions, thus adapting to the student's demonstrated ability throughout the test. This component will include selected response, constructed response, and technology-enhanced constructed response items. It will be administered during the last 12 weeks of the school year. Students will have an opportunity to re-take this component if necessary.

The assessment system is expected to be computer-administered. Smarter Balanced anticipates a three-year phase-in period (until the 2017-2018 school year) during which school districts may administer a comparable paper-and-pencil version of the summative assessment. The assessment system will be translated into five languages: Spanish, American Sign Language, and three additional languages as determined by the member states.

Smarter Balanced will also create optional, computer-adaptive interim assessments in each of grades 3-11. States, districts, schools, and teachers will have discretion over when these assessments can be administered during the school year. They will include the same range of test item types as the summative assessment. Finally, the system will include a set of formative tools, processes, and practices which will be available through a digital library to teachers for use on a daily basis to support their instruction.

More information about Smarter Balanced can be found at: www.smarterbalanced.org.

Governance

The consortium's approach to decision-making, internal organization and capacity, project management, and procurement.

Developing a common, large-scale assessment system across 27 states permits the opportunity to set common, high expectations for what students need to know and be able to do to succeed in college and the workforce and compare results across those states. The unprecedented scale of doing this across 27 states presents substantial logistical, coordination, and policy challenges. To reach this goal, the consortium must practice strong project management and ensure deep engagement and support within and across the member states.

As described in its approved application, Smarter Balanced intended to spend much of the first year of the grant developing working processes and a strong, viable governance structure. The consortium anticipated that this concentrated effort in year one would set up systems and processes to facilitate the major assessment development work over the remaining three years of the grant.

LEADERSHIP

Smarter Balanced developed an executive committee responsible for overseeing the overall development and implementation of the assessment system (see figure 3). The executive committee is comprised of nine members. Six are state representatives elected by the governing states. Two are higher education members: one elected by the governing states' higher education leads and one selected from a higher education membership organization. One seat on the executive committee is filled by a representative Washington, the lead fiscal state. Two of the elected state representatives are elected by the governing states to serve as co-chairs. Judy Park, Associate Superintendent at the Utah Office of Education, and Carissa Miller, Deputy Superintendent at the Idaho State Department of Education, are the current executive committee co-chairs. In addition to these nine members, several non-voting members participate with and advise the executive committee.

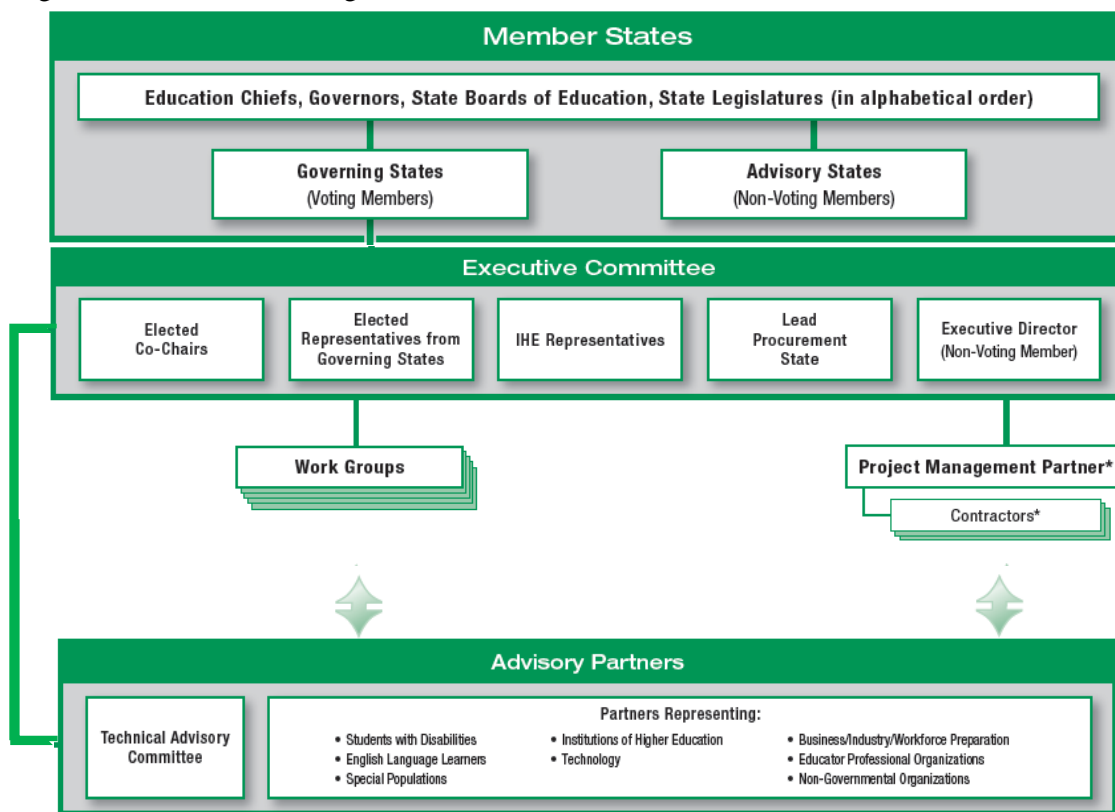
Day-to-day direction of Smarter Balanced is coordinated by the executive director, who reports to the executive committee, working in conjunction with the project management partner, WestEd. During the first year, the consortium hired for the following positions to support the executive director: chief operating officer, lead psychometrician, director of strategic communications and public information officer, director of higher education collaboration, and a consultant who serves as a policy coordinator for the consortium.

Smarter Balanced developed, and member states formally adopted, a governance document laying out key responsibilities for all parties and detailing how decisions are made during the life of the grant. Smarter Balanced operates under a consensus model in which all governing states vote on issues; the consortium generally only takes action if it reaches unanimous agreement. During the first year, Smarter Balanced reported that it did not have difficulty reaching consensus on decisions. The Smarter Balanced governance model does provide an alternative process if consensus is not possible; it entails additional review and evaluation of the issue and continued voting until one position has at least three more votes than the other.

In addition to the executive committee and consortium staff, to lay the groundwork for full implementation, the consortium must engage state leaders, including governors or their education advisors and chief state school officers, to ensure timely and full consideration and resolution of important policy issues, such as the definition of college- and career-readiness, the sustainability of the assessment system at the conclusion of the grant period, and complementary resources to support the

assessment system. Successful implementation of the assessment system must engage state and local leaders in member states and to build understanding of and support for the assessment system. During the first year, Smarter Balanced initiated this effort by hosting a monthly call and semi-annual in-person meetings between Smarter Balanced leadership and the member states' chief state school officers to keep them informed of the consortium's development.

Figure 3. Smarter Balanced governance structure



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Assessment development is a complex process of many interdependent steps. Much of the consortium's work is dependent upon the completion of earlier tasks. During the first year, Smarter Balanced created a master workplan to guide development of its summative assessment system. To a large extent, the consortium will contract for the work of building its assessment system, making effective procurement critically important for the overall success of the program. This requires coordination, both within the member states and across myriad contractors. For example, Smarter Balanced needs to develop item specifications before it can create item-writing training materials, which, in turn, must be completed before it can begin actually writing items. A delay in awarding a contract or completing the work in a contract may have significant repercussions for subsequent consortium work. To guard against that risk, the Smarter Balanced summative master workplan, which was made available for public comment in summer 2011 before being approved by the Department in November 2011, provides a strategy for ensuring timely procurement processes. The workplan, and its related procurement schedule, break the project into discrete components of the assessment system to be separately procured, identifying and accounting for the interdependence of tasks. To date, Washington has released numerous procurements and executed several key contracts.³ The consortium must continue to manage against this schedule,

³ The IT readiness contract was awarded on December 7, 2011; the IT systems architecture contract was awarded on September 15, 2011; the item specifications contract was awarded on December 1, 2011; the accessibility and accommodations policy

identifying and mitigating potential risks, while creating clear, specific requests for proposals (RFPs) and timely execution of contracts to ensure SBAC delivers on the promise of a next-generation assessment system.

WORK GROUPS

To carry out the activities identified in its summative master workplan, Smarter Balanced largely relies upon a series of ten work groups that were created around key consortium activities:

- Accessibility and accommodations
- Assessment design: item development
- Assessment design: performance tasks
- Assessment design: test administration
- Formative assessment practices and professional learning
- Assessment design: test design
- Technology approach
- Transition to the Common Core State Standards
- Reporting
- Validation and psychometrics

Each work group is comprised of a team of assessment staff or curriculum experts recommended by the member states and approved by the executive committee. Smarter Balanced depends upon in-kind contributions of member states' staff time to direct the consortium's work. Each work group member is expected to spend approximately two hours per week on consortium work. The consortium has clearly defined each group's responsibilities and key deliverables. The work groups include staff from WestEd who provide project management support and coordinate work within and across the work groups. A member of the executive committee is appointed to each work group; his or her role is to maintain coherence of the work group's and the overall consortium's activities, guide and prioritize the work group's focus, and ensure that the work group's key issues are elevated to the executive committee for further deliberation and timely resolution. The stated intent of this structure is to partition the work into smaller, manageable components and regularly tap into state staff experience, while maintaining the coherence of the consortium's work. This structure is also intended to ensure alignment in both workplans and products across the full consortium.

STATE MEMBERSHIP

Over the first year, state membership in the consortium changed. While a state that is a governing state may only be a member of one consortium, advisory states can belong to both Smarter Balanced and PARCC. When the consortia were developing their applications in spring 2010, many states initially joined both as a participating state. During the first year of the grant, the number of participating states that were in both consortia decreased as states selected a single consortium to join as a governing state. An important distinction between governing and advisory states is that a governing state has an active role in policy decision-making for the consortium, can vote on such matters, and is committed to using the assessment system or program developed by the consortium. As a consequence, while Smarter Balanced consisted of 17 governing and 14 participating states in September 2010 when the grant was awarded, at the end of December 2011 Smarter Balanced included 21 governing and 6 participating states.

guidelines contract was awarded on January 4, 2012; the psychometric services contract was awarded on February 6, 2012; the item and task materials development contract was awarded on February 6, 2012; the test and computer-adaptive test specifications contract was awarded on February 6, 2012; the item authoring and item pool application contract was awarded on April 3, 2012; and the item and task writing and review for the pilot test contract was awarded on April 3, 2012. RFPs have been released for test engine development; initial achievement level descriptors; test administration; and a sustainability task force consultant.

LESSONS LEARNED

Smarter Balanced learned early in its first year that it would need to increase capacity to manage such a large, complex project. To address this need, the consortium secured external funding for additional staff to support the executive director, including the chief operating officer.

Smarter Balanced also found that expanded communication with chief state school officers from the member states would benefit the consortium. As a result, Smarter Balanced initiated a monthly call and semi-annual in-person meeting between Smarter Balanced leadership and the member states' chief state school officers to keep them informed of the consortium's development.

LOOKING AHEAD

During year two, the consortium will work to establish important assessment policies, such as identifying the length of the test window, test security procedures, accessibility and accommodations policies for students with disabilities and English learners, and initial drafts of performance level descriptors.

In addition, the consortium will develop a plan for assessment system sustainability after the grant period. Toward this end, in December 2011, Smarter Balanced created a sustainability task force that will provide initial options on how to proceed with developing a sustainability plan.

Assessment Design and Development

The extent that the consortium is developing a comprehensive assessment system that measures student knowledge against the full range of the college- and career-ready standards, including the standards against which student achievement has traditionally been difficult to measure; provides an accurate measure of achievement, including for high- and low-performing students, and an accurate measure of student growth over a full academic year or course; and produces student achievement data and student growth data that can be used to determine whether individual students are college- and career-ready or on track to being college- and career-ready.

CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS

As a primary step in developing its assessment system, the consortium engaged content and assessment staff in member states and external content experts, including several of the writers of the CCSS, to develop draft *Content Specifications with Content Mapping for the Summative Assessment of the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* and *Content Specifications for the Summative Assessment of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics*⁴ (referred to as the *Content Specifications*). As noted in the introduction to the January 6, 2012, draft of the English language arts *Content Specifications*:

Developed in partnership with member states, leading researchers, content experts, and the authors of the Common Core, content specifications are intended to ensure that the assessment system accurately assesses the full range of the standards. This content mapping of the Common Core...standards - with content specifications for assessment - provides clear and rigorous prioritized assessment targets that will be used to translate the grade-level Common Core standards into content frameworks from which test blueprints and item/task specifications will be established. Assessment evidence at each grade level provides item and task specificity and clarifies the connections between instructional processes and assessment outcomes. (p. 7)

A primary stated intent of these documents is to provide overall statements about students' knowledge and skills related to the standards. These statements, or "claims," will then help drive the development of the assessment system. For example, by including as a claim of the English language arts assessment that a student "can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences," Smarter Balanced is highlighting that this is a primary skill students should be able to master. Consequently, the assessment system will include items that elicit evidence sufficient to measure whether students can write effectively.

⁴ The English language arts and mathematics drafts are available at: www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/.

Draft English Language Arts Claims

- Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.
- Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Students can employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Students can engage research/inquiry to investigate topics and to analyze, integrate, and present information.

From the English language arts *Content Specifications* draft released on January 6, 2012.

The *Content Specifications*, including the potential claims, are important precursors to developing the test blueprint, preparing item specifications, and writing items. The specifications will guide the consortium's item and test development. They also signal to teachers, schools, and the public the Smarter Balanced approach to building a test blueprint to authentically assess the CCSS. Initial drafts of the *Content Specifications* in each subject were released for public comment in August 2011. A second draft of the English language arts specifications was released for public comment in September 2011, and the second draft of the mathematics document was released for public comment in December 2011. The Smarter Balanced governing states will vote to adopt the English language arts and mathematics claims in early 2012 and, following that, a final version of the specifications will be released publicly.

Draft Mathematics Claims

- Students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency.
- Students can solve a range of complex, well-posed problems in pure and applied mathematics, making productive use of knowledge and problem-solving strategies.
- Students can clearly and precisely construct viable arguments to support their own reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others.
- Students can analyze complex, real-world scenarios and can construct and use mathematical models to interpret and solve problems.

From the mathematics *Content Specifications* draft released on December 9, 2011.

ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT

In order to build its assessment system, the consortium must develop a wealth of assessment items. Smarter Balanced intends to use three approaches to build its pool of test items: donation of existing items by member states, donation of items developed by member states' current item-writing processes, and direct development of new items through consortium procurement.

The assessment development plan in the Smarter Balanced application called for the initial item development work to occur during year two of the grant. In its original application, Smarter Balanced intended to begin by evaluating test items contributed by member states by April 2011 with the first round of item writing between December 2011 and March 2012. The approved application called for targeted

small-scale pilot assessments, or “tryouts,” in April 2012, pilot testing in the 2012-2013 school year, and a census field test in the 2013-2014 school year. Based upon the results of the field test, the application called for Smarter Balanced to set initial achievement standards in summer 2014 for state adoption, which would be validated following the first full administration of the summative assessments in the 2014-2015 school year.

While maintaining the key activities in the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years, the Department approved a request from Smarter Balanced to revise its initial item development timeline by updating its summative assessment master workplan. The revised plan called for Smarter Balanced to develop item and task prototypes between May and October 2011. Item and performance task style guides and accessibility guidelines would be developed in fall 2011. Item writing training materials would be developed and distributed by March 2012 and items would be written between March and August 2012. The resulting items would still undergo tryouts during the 2011-2012 school year.

Smarter Balanced has not yet created item and task prototypes. In fall 2011, Smarter Balanced released several RFPs,⁵ including those related to the development of:

- Item and task specifications, style guide, bias and sensitivity guidelines, and accessibility and accommodations;
- Accommodations guidelines, accessibility and accommodations policies and materials;
- Item writer and reviewer training materials;
- Summative test specifications and blueprints and computer adaptive test (CAT) specifications;
- Item authoring and item pool application ; and
- New and innovative assessment items and tasks in sufficient quantities for the pilot tests in the 2012-2013 school year.

In December 2011, Smarter Balanced began work on the item and task specifications, style guide, bias and sensitivity guidelines, and accessibility and accommodations guidelines. Initial drafts were shared publicly in January 2012 with final materials due to be completed in spring 2012. This information will inform the development of training materials for teachers and educators to write and review items and tasks as well as form the basis of actually developing items and tasks. The contract for writing items and tasks for the pilot test was awarded at the beginning of April 2012.

RESEARCH

Related to the activities required to develop the assessment system, Smarter Balanced is developing a comprehensive research plan to support the assessment system and demonstrate its validity and reliability. During the first year of the grant, Smarter Balanced created a technical advisory committee (TAC) comprised of 13 national leaders with extensive assessment expertise, including individuals knowledgeable about students with disabilities and English learners. The TAC met three times in 2011 and will continue to meet three times a year during the life of the grant. In addition, Smarter Balanced has been engaging TAC members more regularly in the consortium’s work, such as by including TAC members in reviewing RFPs.

In addition, Smarter Balanced drafted a validity framework for review and input from its TAC at the December 2011 meeting. The consortium will use this framework as an initial plan for evaluating the claims about student knowledge made from the assessment (as detailed in the *Content Specifications*). Once complete, the validity framework will guide the consortium’s research agenda. The consortium also released an RFP in October 2011⁶ for psychometric services to support the consortium by both

⁵ As noted on page 7, Smarter Balanced has awarded contracts for the first four RFPs listed and is in the process of finalizing the remaining two contracts as of March 31, 2012.

⁶ Smarter Balanced awarded a contract for psychometric services on February 6, 2012.

undertaking research and analyses to evaluate the work of Smarter Balanced and its various contractors, and by suggesting additional research that Smarter Balanced should undertake to evaluate the assessment system during the life of the grant.

LESSONS LEARNED

Smarter Balanced spent a large portion of the first year examining the CCSS and considering how it can develop an assessment system that truly measures the full range of those content standards. This work took longer than the consortium originally anticipated and resulted in the *Content Specifications* documents and identification of the claims it will make about student learning. Assessment development work is inherently inter-related; the *Content Specifications* needed to be completed before work could begin to develop assessment items and tasks.

As a result, the revised summative assessment master workplan revised the timeline for developing assessment items. It did not impact the timeline for major activities – pilot testing of the consortium’s first 10,000 items and tasks will be conducted in the 2012-2013 school year, followed by field testing in Smarter Balanced school districts in the 2013-2014 school year of the full set of 37,000 items and tasks, and the first operational test in the 2014-2015 school year – but moved the development of assessment items to begin in spring 2012.

This resulted, however, in Smarter Balanced not developing item and task prototypes, per its timeline, in year one. Remaining on the consortium’s timeline for developing items and tasks beginning in spring 2012 is important for both the development of item and task prototypes and samples of items that can undergo item tryouts in the 2011-2012 school year, but also in preparation for the larger pilot test scheduled for the 2012-2013 school year, for which a substantial number of items and tasks will need to be available.

LOOKING AHEAD

The second year of the grant will see the formal adoption of the claims about student learning in English language arts and mathematics by the Smarter Balanced member states. These will inform the development of the test blueprints and specifications, which provide an additional layer of detail about the kinds of information that will be included in the assessment system. Through this process as well as the item tryouts, Smarter Balanced will also provide public information about the types of items that will be on the summative assessment to expand general understanding of consortium’s work. Such public engagement around content will signal to the field how the assessment will improve upon existing state assessments.

Beginning in spring 2012, Smarter Balanced will begin developing items and tasks for cognitive labs and small-scale item tryouts and preparing for the pilot test in the 2012-2013 school year. This period will provide an opportunity for the consortium to develop and test new and innovative items that rely on technology to present information and capture student responses. These innovative, technology-enhanced items are an important component of the consortium’s plan to measure the complex, higher-order skills included in the CCSS. An important activity that will begin in year two will be to determine whether these items are accessible for students with disabilities and English learners. It will also provide further direction and concrete examples to educators and the public about the composition of the assessment system, how the assessments will build and expand upon existing state assessment systems, and the types of knowledge and skills that students will be expected to demonstrate.

In year two, the consortium will also determine its design for setting achievement standards. It will finalize and begin implementing its research strategy and begin development of its technical manuals. Smarter Balanced and PARCC will create a cross-consortium group of national experts to advise the consortia on common technical and policy issues.

The work to date to develop the summative assessments will inform the creation of the formative processes and tools and the format and intent of the interim assessments. In year two, Smarter Balanced will finalize the approach to the interim assessments and develop and begin implementing a comprehensive workplan for the formative and interim assessments.

Professional Capacity, Outreach, and Communications

The extent that the consortium is working to support member states to implement rigorous college- and career-ready standards, to support teachers and administrators in implementing the assessment system, and to inform and build support among the public and key stakeholders.

PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

In its application, Smarter Balanced selected the CCSS as the college- and career-ready content standards in English language arts and mathematics to which it will align its assessment system.⁷ All 27 states in Smarter Balanced formally adopted the CCSS before or during the first year of the grant.

Member states are in the midst of developing and implementing plans to transition to the new standards. Smarter Balanced is supporting states through this transition. During the first year of the grant, Smarter Balanced provided membership for all states to join the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO's) Implementing the Common Core Standards (ICCS) initiative, which brought together teams of state representatives for three meetings to discuss standards implementation challenges and plans. In addition, the ICCS provides the opportunity for states to meet with "coaches" – former chief state school officers or deputy chief state school officers – regularly throughout the year to identify and address state-specific implementation issues.

To help states in their transition to the new standards, and as an initial step in assessment development, Smarter Balanced created the *Eligible Content for the Summative Assessment*⁸ in March 2011, which provides an initial review of the CCSS and a starting point for the consortium's discussion of test and item specifications. It provides information on possible item types for each standard (i.e., selected response, constructed response, or technology-enhanced) and the depth of knowledge required to fully address the standard (i.e., recall, basic application, strategic thinking, or extended thinking). In addition, the *Content Specifications* documents for English language arts and mathematics build on the *Eligible Content* document, providing an additional resource for states, districts, schools, and teachers as they develop their plans to transition to the CCSS.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communicating regularly and deeply with key stakeholders – member state, district, and school staff; institutes of higher education; national education policy groups and content experts; and the public – is vital to building understanding of and support for the assessment system. Over the first year, Smarter Balanced attempted to be responsive to requests for information from individuals and groups.

At the end of 2011, Smarter Balanced increased its use of webinars to share information on its activities to member states and the public. The webinars provided periodic public updates around specific activities or deliverables, such as the release of the technology architecture or to discuss initial drafts of the item specifications. They provided an opportunity to give the public more concrete information on the consortium's progress. In addition, Smarter Balanced released several documents for public review and input prior to finalizing them, such as the summative master workplan and procurement schedule, the *Content Specifications*, and the item specifications. This is important to build transparency and provide an opportunity for knowledgeable experts to provide input into the consortium's activities. In early 2012, Smarter Balanced released a new web site, www.smarterbalanced.org, to house these materials and other information about the consortium.

⁷ The CCSS was a state-driven initiative led by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) started in 2008 and finalized in summer 2010 following several rounds of public review.

⁸ Available at: www.smarterbalanced.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/SBAC_CCSS_Eligible_Content_Final_Report_030411.pdf.

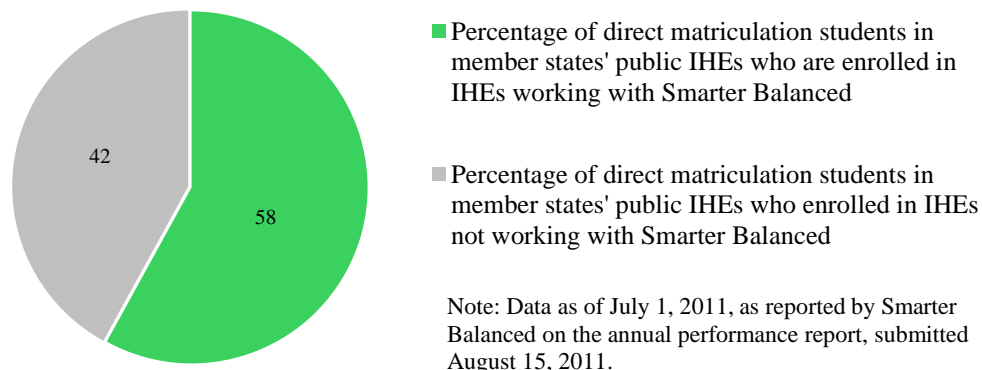
Continuing and expanding these activities over the coming months and during the life of the grant is vital. The consortium needs to expand both the reach and depth of its communications, particularly as development work progress with the creation of item prototypes and preparation get underway for the pilot test in the 2012-2013 school year. It is important for the consortium to continuously educate stakeholders and the public about its activities as well as provide opportunities to receive feedback to inform its work.

HIGHER EDUCATION ENGAGEMENT

Smarter Balanced received letters of intent from 163 IHEs that are committed to working with Smarter Balanced on developing and using the results of the assessment system being developed. The institutions enroll 58 percent of all direct matriculation students in the Smarter Balanced member states (i.e., students who enroll in the state's public university system within two years of graduating from high school). The IHEs are committed to participating in the design and development of the consortium's final high school summative assessments and implement policies that exempt from remedial courses and place into credit-bearing college courses any student who meets the consortium's achievement standard.

During the first year, Smarter Balanced created two voting positions on its executive committee to provide an opportunity for higher education representatives to be integrally involved in key consortium decision-making, though one position was unfilled during the first year. In addition, in October 2011, the consortium hired a director of higher education collaboration, who began developing and implementing a strategy to involve higher education in the work groups and other consortium work.

Figure 4. Percentage of direct matriculation students in Smarter Balanced member states who attend an IHE that are working with Smarter Balanced



LOOKING AHEAD

One of the key challenges facing the consortium's member states is the transition to the CCSS and the increase in expectations this will require from schools and districts. Ensuring that students, teachers, schools, and districts understand and are prepared for the CCSS will be a significant factor in the consortium's success. While individual member states are responsible for implementing the new content standards, the consortium can play an important role in supporting states during the transition. One component of the consortium's theory of action is creating an assessment system to continuously improve teaching and learning, where the assessment system is designed to develop understanding of what learning standards are, what high-quality work looks like, what growth is occurring, and what is needed for student learning.

To help address this challenge, during the second year of the grant, Smarter Balanced will continue to support governing states' participation in the ICCS to assist states in their transition to and implementation of the new content standards they selected, the CCSS. In addition, Smarter Balanced will hire content lead specialists in English language arts and mathematics to work with external groups to begin identifying or adapting sample curriculum materials for use by teachers, schools, and districts. Smarter Balanced will work with a national panel of content experts to develop exemplar modules of formative assessment tasks and tools and create professional development modules to show teachers how to use the materials being developed.

Over the next three years, Smarter Balanced will develop and disseminate resources and tools to improve teachers' assessment literacy and understanding of how to use formative tools and data. These materials will populate a "digital library" the consortium is developing. In year three, the consortium will convene teams of teachers from each member state, totaling 2,700 teachers across the consortium, to identify existing curriculum materials and formative tools to further populate the digital library and by creating a "consumer report." Identifying, and helping member states identify, high-quality professional development resources and tools and making them available in the Smarter Balanced digital library will aid the states' transition and implementation efforts, improving teachers', schools', and districts' preparation for the CCSS and the assessment system being developed.

An important and related challenge facing the consortium is the continuing need to communicate effectively across multiple levels from parents, teachers, administrators, and state leaders. Building understanding and support for Smarter Balanced will require the consortium to continue its efforts to share resources and information about their work. Specifically, Smarter Balanced will continue efforts begun in the first year to engage member states' chief state school officers to identify and address key policy issues.

In addition, Smarter Balanced will continue its efforts to engage higher education in the consortium's activities. Involving IHEs in the consortium's work is important for ensuring the assessment system is truly measuring college- and career-readiness.

Technology

The extent that the consortium is using technology to the maximum extent appropriate to develop, administer, and score assessments and report results.

Smarter Balanced is working to meet the Department's requirement in the RTTA notice inviting applications that the consortium maximize the use of technology to develop and administer the tests and to score and report student results. Two important advancements in the Smarter Balanced assessment design are the use of technology-enhanced assessment items that can better capture the range and extent of students' knowledge and abilities compared to traditional test items and the use of a computer-adaptive test (CAT) design that will adjust the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment based on student response to previous questions. The CAT design can provide a more precise analysis of students' abilities with fewer questions when compared to traditional assessments.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ARCHITECTURE

In fall 2011, Smarter Balanced developed an information technology (IT) architecture that identified how individuals will use, interact with, and benefit from the Smarter Balanced system. From this, the consortium articulated the expected users, process flows, and system requirements for the IT system. This was accomplished through a series of intensive workshops with Smarter Balanced leaders and stakeholders that identified the high-level design for the technology system that will support the assessment system. The design includes plans and recommendations to the consortium for how the IT systems should be built. The consortium made this architecture publicly available on its website in January 2012 and conducted a public webinar. The architecture includes a comprehensive strategy to guide the development, implementation, and management of the assessment technology system and an application architecture that maps the assessment functions to the necessary applications, identifies how data will flow among these applications, and ensures end-to-end data integrity. It also provides an information architecture that describes the data structures for determining how the data are processed, stored, and utilized. Finally, the architecture identifies a technical systems architecture providing the blueprint for the ways data, applications, and technology infrastructure will work together.

In November 2011, Smarter Balanced began the process to build components of its technology system by issuing an RFP for the creation of a test blueprint and CAT specifications.⁹ As noted in the RFP, the contractor will be responsible, in part, for developing the CAT specifications and conducting initial simulation studies and an interface for allowing states and districts to craft non-summative assessments to inform instruction. In December 2011, Smarter Balanced issued an RFP for the creation of an item authoring and item pool application. This contract, once awarded, will be responsible for creating the digital warehouse for the Smarter Balanced assessment items.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY READINESS TOOL

A challenge for the Smarter Balanced member states will be to increase districts' and schools' technological capacity. This is vital for ensuring students learn the 21st century skills they need to be successful in college or the workforce. In addition, districts and schools will need expanded capacity for them to be prepared to administer the computer-based assessment system in the 2014-2015 school year. Improving and increasing technology in schools and districts is a larger issue than for the development of the consortium's assessment system, but the consortium must play a key role to support member states.

Smarter Balanced, working in concert with PARCC, released an RFP in early summer 2011 and awarded a contract in December 2011 to develop a technology readiness tool for use in the 2011-2012 and subsequent school years. The tool is intended to be used by member states, school districts, and schools in

⁹ Smarter Balanced awarded a contract for the test blueprint and CAT specifications on February 6, 2012.

either consortium to evaluate their capacity to deliver a computer-based assessment. The tool will compare school-level resources to consortium-identified minimum technology specifications. The consortia intend for the tool to be used in both the fall and spring of each year to capture changes in school capacity; the tool was made available to states and districts in April 2012.

Several of the consortium's member states have previously transitioned to or are in the process of transitioning to computer-administered assessments. These states can share useful experience to help other states develop and implement transition plans. Smarter Balanced anticipated in its application that some proportion of schools may not be ready for a computer-administered assessment in the 2014-2015 school year. As a result, the consortium included in its proposal a transition period (using paper-and-pencil tests) for those schools that are not ready for CAT in the 2014-2015 school year. A non-computer-based administration, however, restricts the ability of the teachers and schools to get the same level of rich data provided by the CAT design and through technology-enhanced items; the consortium's member states should increase efforts to minimize the number of schools that use the paper-and-pencil version of the tests.

AUTOMATED SCORING

In its application, Smarter Balanced proposed to use automated scoring of student assessments to reduce the cost and improve the timeliness of providing data to parents and teachers. The consortium, along with PARCC, encouraged state engagement with a Hewlett Foundation initiative to investigate the utility of automated scoring. The Hewlett Foundation is sponsoring a series of competitions to evaluate existing automated scoring systems for different types of items and an open prize competition to solicit new and innovative approaches to automated scoring of student assessments. The competition will have three components: long-form essays, short-answer questions, and technology-enabled mathematics questions. The first component, scoring extended essays, was launched in January 2012 with initial results from the private competition available in April 2012. Details of this study regarding private systems are available at <http://bit.ly/HJWwdP>. Following the private competition is a public competition; additional information on the public competition is available at www.kaggle.com/c/asap-aes. Smarter Balanced anticipates learning from this important research.

LOOKING AHEAD

In year two, Smarter Balanced will focus on building the components of the assessment system. The consortium created an Architecture Review Board, comprised of state elementary and secondary and higher education leaders, to review and approve its technology approach and oversee the implementation of the system.

The IT readiness tool was released in spring 2012 so member states, districts, and schools can inventory the current technology capacity. Based on the results of that inventory and the assessment development work that will have been completed at that point, Smarter Balanced will identify the potential technology requirements, such as for hardware and software, to administer the assessments. While this will likely be refined during the life of the grant as the assessment system is developed, it will provide useful information to guide state and district plans. The consortium must attempt to anticipate and consider how new and existing technological advances, such as tablets, might be included in the assessment system.

CONCLUSION

Smarter Balanced intended the first year of the grant to be a planning and preparation year, with the majority of the key activities related to assessment development occurring in years two through four. Much of the work to write and test assessment items and tasks and to build the technology system will begin in earnest in year two. Creating a common, large-scale assessment system for use by 27 states that can be used for multiple purposes, such as to evaluate school effectiveness, inform teacher and leader evaluation systems and professional development supports, and teaching, learning, and program improvement, is a significant undertaking and unlike any previously developed assessment system. Successful implementation will require an unprecedented degree of coordination by member states and outreach and communications across all levels of education – teachers, schools, districts, states, higher education, and local, state, and national policymakers.

SUCSESSES

During the first year, Smarter Balanced developed a working governance structure and a clear, comprehensive plan for the development of the summative assessments. In fall 2011, with the release of several initial RFPs, the consortium took significant steps forward in its development plans.

- *Summative master workplan*
During the first year, Smarter Balanced was successful in creating a master workplan for the development of the summative assessment system that identifies key activities, which are mapped to specific procurements. Importantly, the consortium has identified the interdependencies between activities and is trying to manage these activities in relation to key deliverables in the project, such as the timing of pilot and field testing.
- *Content Specifications*
A second important activity initiated during the first year was the creation of the *Content Specifications* in English language arts and mathematics. The consortium worked with member states, the writers of the CCSS, and other content experts, to present the CCSS in a format to be able to validly measure whether students are college- and career-ready or on track to be college- or career-ready. Both documents, which will be finalized in spring 2012, provide greater clarity to member states, districts, schools, and the public about the CCSS. They also identify the claims from the assessment system, which are the primary outcomes about students' knowledge and abilities that will be measured by the assessments. The specifications, which went through two rounds of public comment, will guide the development of test blueprints and items and tasks.
- *Technology*
During the first year, Smarter Balanced developed a technology plan to maximize the use of technology in the assessment system. The architecture, which was finalized in January 2012, lays out the overall design of the assessment system. That approach is built on a modular design, with the consortium separately procuring components that will work in concert to deliver, administer, score, and report the assessments. Smarter Balanced is designing a system in which member states can create unique or innovative approaches to components, so long as they meet a consortium-defined minimum standard to ensure comparable results.

CHALLENGES

The Department notes, however, that some areas of development faced challenges.

- *Project management*

Project management is an on-going challenge. For example, Smarter Balanced did not develop item and task prototypes, per its timeline, in year one. Smarter Balanced has made progress in releasing several important RFPs for assessment development in fall 2011 and awarding contracts. It is important that the consortium continue to manage both the timely awarding of contracts and the delivery of high-quality products from the contractors. Subsequent item development work is dependent upon the completion of the initial work underway. Delays awarding contracts or completing work in a timely manner decrease the time available for work such as writing sufficient items for the pilot test in the 2012-2013 school year, in order for the consortium to meet its key activities.

In addition, successful implementation of a next-generation assessment system involves both technical and policy decisions. To lay the groundwork for full implementation, the consortium must engage state leaders, including governors or their education advisors and chief state school officers, to ensure timely and full consideration and resolution of important policy issues. While during the first year, Smarter Balanced improved its engagement of chief state school officers, it must continue and expand these efforts to ensure the buy-in and support for the consortium's work.

- *Item development*

The Smarter Balanced assessment system will require a large pool of items and tasks to deliver a computer-adaptive test across 27 states (the consortium anticipates developing 37,000 items). The need to develop and review items and tasks to determine whether they are accessible and measure the knowledge and skills they are designed to measure is particularly acute for new and innovative technology-enhanced items and performance tasks, which states have less experience using in large-scale assessments. Trying out items on small groups of students in the 2011-2012 school year and having sufficient items for the pilot test in 2012-2013 are vital for providing data to inform future development work. Providing information to member states and the public about the Smarter Balanced assessment, including providing sample items, will provide greater understanding of the work of the consortium and, ultimately, the assessments being developed.

Initial prototyping work did not occur as scheduled in year one. Smarter Balanced was able to begin initial work – creating item specifications, a style guide, and accommodations guides – but item and task development did not occur according to the original plan. Item writing will begin in spring 2012¹⁰ and it is important that this work proceed on schedule in year two.

- *Communications*

With such a large project involving so many partners from 27 states and 163 IHEs, there is a need for regular and informative communications at various levels of engagement. Smarter Balanced successfully involves staff from member states, primarily from the assessment teams, deeply in their work through the executive committee and ten work groups. The consortium will need to redouble efforts to regularly communicate with key stakeholders, such as state leadership, district and school staff and teachers, IHEs, and national education policy groups. Though the Department is encouraged by efforts such as the monthly calls and semi-annual meetings of chief state school officers, the series of webinars the consortium hosted in late 2011 and early 2012, and the release of key documents for public viewing and commenting, Smarter Balanced will need to continue and expand efforts to provide regular communications with national, state, and local leaders. This is vital to ensuring Smarter Balanced has the engagement, input, and support needed for the assessment system being developed.

¹⁰ The contract for item and task writing and review for the pilot test was awarded on April 3, 2012.

The Department is pleased to note that the consortium has identified and taken initial steps to mitigate each of these risks and looks forward to partnering with the consortium where possible to ensure the consortium's success.

Looking ahead to the remainder of year two, Smarter Balanced will take significant steps to build its assessment system, awarding the majority of the contracts necessary for the summative assessments. The consortium will:

- Begin developing assessment items and tasks, conduct small-scale tryouts of items in spring 2012, and prepare for a larger pilot test in the 2012-2013 school year.
- Develop a test blueprint and initial achievement level descriptors, which will describe the specific knowledge and skills students should demonstrate at various achievement levels, including college and career readiness.
- Begin building the IT system to support the development, administration, scoring, and reporting of the assessment system. This will involve developing a digital warehouse for authoring and storing items, designing the computer-adaptive test engine, and developing the systems to administer the test and report the results.
- Release the results of the technology readiness tool for member states, districts, and schools that inventory the technology available and identify gaps to help states prepare for the new assessment system.

GLOSSARY

Accommodations means changes in the administration of an assessment, including but not limited to changes in assessment setting, scheduling, timing, presentation format, response mode, and combinations of these changes, that do not change the construct intended to be measured by the assessment or the meaning of the resulting scores. Accommodations must be used for equity in assessment and not provide advantage to students eligible to receive them.

Achievement standard means the level of student achievement on summative assessments that indicates that (a) for the final high school summative assessments in mathematics or English language arts, a student is college- and career-ready; or (b) for summative assessments in mathematics or English language arts at a grade level other than the final high school summative assessments, a student is on track to being college- and career-ready. An achievement standard must be determined using empirical evidence over time.

The **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)** was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. This historic legislation was designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education. The U.S. Department of Education received a \$97.4 billion appropriation.

College- and career-ready (or readiness) means, with respect to a student, that the student is prepared for success, without remediation, in credit-bearing, entry-level courses in an institution of higher education (IHE) (as defined in section 101(a) of the HEA), as demonstrated by an assessment score that meets or exceeds the achievement standard for the final high school summative assessment in mathematics or English language arts.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are K-12 English language arts and mathematics standards developed in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders including states, governors, chief state school officers, content experts, teachers, school administrators, and parents. The standards establish clear and consistent goals for learning that will prepare America's children for success in college and careers. As of January 2012, the Common Core State Standards were adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia.

Common set of college- and career-ready standards means a set of academic content standards for grades K-12 that (a) define what a student must know and be able to do at each grade level; (b) if mastered, would ensure that the student is college- and career-ready by the time of high school graduation; and (c) are substantially identical across all states in a consortium. A state may supplement the common set of college- and career-ready standards with additional content standards, provided that the additional standards do not comprise more than 15 percent of the state's total standards for that content area.

Direct matriculation student means a student who entered college as a freshman within two years of graduating from high school.

English learner means a student who is an English learner as that term is defined by the consortium. The consortium must define the term in a manner that is uniform across member states and consistent with section 9101(25) of the ESEA.

Formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust on-going teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. Thus, it is done by the teacher in the classroom for the explicit purpose of

diagnosing where students are in their learning, where gaps in knowledge and understanding exist, and how to help teachers and students improve student learning. The assessment is generally embedded within the learning activity and linked directly to the current unit of instruction. The assessments are typically small-scale (less than a class period) and short-cycle. Furthermore, the tasks presented may vary from one student to another depending on the teacher's judgement about the need for specific information about a student at a given point in time. Providing corrective feedback, modifying instruction to improve the student's understanding, or indicating areas of further instruction are essential aspects of a classroom formative assessment.

Governing state means a state that (a) is a member of only one consortium applying for a grant in the competition category, (b) has an active role in policy decision-making for the consortium, and (c) is committed to using the assessment system or program developed by the consortium.

Interim assessment is the term for the assessments that fall between formative and summative assessments. They typically evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals within a limited timeframe and are designed to inform decisions at both the classroom and school or district level. They may be given at the classroom level to provide information for the teacher, but unlike true formative assessments, the results of interim assessments can be meaningfully aggregated and reported at a broader level. As such, the timing of the administration is likely to be controlled by the school or district rather than by the teachers. They may serve a variety of purposes, including predicting a student's ability to succeed on a large-scale summative assessment, evaluating a particular educational program or pedagogy, or diagnosing gaps in a student's learning.

On track to being college- and career-ready means, with respect to a student, that the student is performing at or above grade level such that the student will be college- and career-ready by the time of high school graduation, as demonstrated by an assessment score that meets or exceeds the achievement standard for the student's grade level on a summative assessment in mathematics or English language arts.

The **Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)** is one of two consortia of states awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.

The **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarter Balanced)** is one of two consortia of states awarded grants under the Race to the Top Assessment program to develop next-generation assessment systems that are aligned to common K-12 English language and mathematics standards and that will accurately measure student progress toward college and career readiness.

A **student with a disability** means, for purposes of this competition, a student who has been identified as a student with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended (IDEA), except for a student with a disability who is eligible to participate in alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards consistent with 34 CFR 200.6(a)(2).

Summative assessments are generally given one time at the end of some unit of time such as the semester or school year to evaluate students' performance against a defined set of content standards. These assessments typically are given statewide and these days are usually used as part of an accountability program or to otherwise inform policy.